

ABOUT VISUAL ARTISTS

Monte Dolack: "Altered State"

Jan. 17-April 13 at the Holter Museum of Art in Helena, with a reception at 6 p.m. Jan. 17

Artist's website: www.dolack.com

Missoula artist Monte Dolack shares a new body of paintings that represent his musings on the contemporary Montana landscape.

"His imagery invites us to contemplate the past, try to make sense of where we are, and to look forward," says Holter Museum of Art Executive Director Caleb Fey.

Montana has an historic legacy of industry. The Treasure State's diverse natural landscape is delicately balanced with its civilization, industry and development. Dolack's paintings address subjects and themes such as Butte's Berkeley Pit, the Clark Fork River, the Great Falls oil refinery along the Missouri River, the Anaconda Copper Refinery Smelter, wind generators and more.

Dolack's own personal history involves a relationship with industry: his grandfather, Steve Dolack, was an immigrant coal miner in Belt; his father, Mike Dolack, worked at the Great Falls Anaconda copper refinery; and after graduating from high school, the artist also worked at the copper refinery in Great Falls while attending college.

These new paintings use a variety of materials including aluminum, coal, wood and found materials. He created some of the paintings on copper panels, which allows the iridescence of the metal to shine through the paint.

The paintings are enclosed by black wooden frames that were handcrafted by frame-maker Julie Tippetts, with a surface treatment of rubbed charcoal and iron oxide. The exhibit also includes new sculptures that are assemblages of various found materials relating to Montana's industrial and natural resources.

Western Art & Architecture has called this exhibition "the most important and ambitious show of the artist's career."



"Oil and Water" by Monte Dolack

Ellen Ornitz: "Studies"

Through Feb. 12 at Oh Susanna's Jewelry, in the Emerson Center for Arts and Culture in Bozeman

Ellen Ornitz, former curator of exhibits and education at the Emerson Center, shares a new series of wall-hung sculptures that are studies of natural forms floating within painted dioramas.

Ornitz, a mixed media sculptor who has lived in the Gallatin Valley for the past 40 years, fabricated the pieces' ceramic elements by pressing porcelain into plaster molds of indigenous plant material, river bottom detritus, animal bones and the human body. The ceramic pieces are then altered, carved, fired and stained with oil paints.

The casting, layering and arranging process results in sculptural relief collages with both recognizable and imaginary aspects. According to the artist, "time, suspension and disintegration" are dominant themes in the work.

Ornitz earned a bachelor's in fine arts from the University of California, a master's in secondary art education from the University of Indiana, and studied ceramics and sculpture at Montana State University. Her work has been recently featured in exhibitions at the Missoula Art Museum and Holter Museum of Art in Helena, the Urban Art Project at a Great Falls parking garage, and a two-person exhibit at Aunt Dofe's Hall of Recent Memory in Willow Creek. Her work is also included in a nationally traveling exhibit, "Speaking Volumes."

She currently serves on the board of the Holter Art Museum and has served on the Montana Arts Council and the Museum and Art Gallery Directors Association. She has also been a juror for the Yellowstone Art Museum's annual art auction and for numerous student exhibits at Montana State University and The University of Montana.



"Red Still Life #4" by Ellen Ornitz

Christine Joy: "Currents"

Through Jan. 15 at the Missoula Art Museum in Missoula

Bozeman artist Christine Joy creates sculpture from willows, red osier, and other branches. Although the forms and materials are rooted in traditional basketry, the artist's approach and technique grow firmly out of contemporary sculptural practice.

The majority of her objects can be walked around and viewed "in the round," a concept fixed in contemporary sculptural aesthetic. Her work has nothing to do with creating utilitarian containers, yet the intrinsic point of origin often lends reference to the works as basketry or basket forms. She considers herself a basket maker, just not in the traditional sense.

Joy explains that she never intended on becoming a basket maker when, in the spring of 1981, she simply wanted to make a basket. Over the course of the next several years her creative and technical processes evolved until she fell in love with working with willow cuttings.

Her material of choice, wild willow, which she harvests in the fall, simultaneously guides and constrains the forms while she creates them. Joy works "one stick at a time in collaboration with the willow and the form taking shape."

The power of these sculptural pieces stems from the fundamental nature of the work – that the medium enlightens the form until the material and object become one – and reflects Joy's skilled, intuitive approach.

The title "Currents" references the essence of her work – repetition, rhythm, flow, and communication with the natural materials, but also suggests the natural forces at play in the object's creation.

Joy earned a master's in art therapy from Vermont College of Norwich University, and a bachelor of fine arts in printmaking from the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY.



"Union" by Christine Joy

Joel Soiseth: "Edgy"

Jan. 13-Feb. 28 at Carroll Art Gallery, Carroll College, Helena

Joel Soiseth, who has been an art professor at Montana State University-Northern in Havre for 26 years, says he strives "to depict things that are somewhat conventionally beautiful, but have an aura of strangeness, mystery and a slight evocation of unease ... edginess." Hence the title of his exhibit at Carroll College.

Soiseth's teaching responsibilities at MSU-Northern include drawing, painting, illustration, graphic design, photography and art history. "I spend as much time in the studio as my teaching schedule allows," he says. He often works on campus at Pershing Hall, the building in which he teaches, and occasionally paints with his classes.

The artist has devoted most of his recent efforts to oil painting, "a medium I am quite fond of for its versatility and richness of color."

Soiseth paints in a traditional manner, often directly influenced by historical works. "I was especially inspired and fascinated by Jan Van Eyck, the early 'surrealist' Hieronymus Bosch, the later Surrealist movement and the 'dark manner' of artists like Leonardo Da Vinci and Caravaggio," he says.

He's been concentrating in the past few years on the human form and says he's been especially grateful "for the wonderful, patient and cooperative models I have had over the years."

Before beginning his tenure at MSU-Northern he taught at Mayville State College in North Dakota and worked in commercial art. He holds a bachelor degree in psychology and an MFA from the University of North Dakota.



"Ashley" by Joel Soiseth

Featured Artist: Tim Carlborg

Feb. 1-28 at Purple Pomegranate in Whitefish with a reception Feb. 15

Artist's website: www.handmadegrowlers.com

Kalispell artist Tim Carlborg says he identifies with the simplicity of early American pottery. "Traditional American pottery was often not fancy, nor pretty; it was functional and served a very specific purpose whether it be as a cooking vessel, drinking vessel, or storage vessel," he writes.

He also appreciates the communal aspects of pottery, which was often centered around cooking, eating, or sharing a drink. Early potters, he notes, "did not make art; they made wares. They made rudimentary things for daily use prior to refrigeration and mass-produced glassware. They made simple, functional and durable goods."

He also identifies with the work ethic of those early potters – "craftsmen who labored hard, digging, cleaning, throwing and firing the clay," in a tradition passed on for generations.

Carlborg applies that perspective to his own handcrafted ceramic growlers – half-gallon beer jugs designed to transport beer home from the brewery. Like potters before him, he enjoys making simple wares that can be used on a daily basis, and embody "not only the fruits of my labor, passion and hard work but also that of the brewer."

Carlborg, an Army veteran, received his bachelor's in art education from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and is a state-licensed K-12 art teacher. He participates in the Montana Arts Council's Montana Artrepreneur Program, and took the Artistic Merit Award and the Customer Consideration Award at the program's annual Artist Gathering, held Nov. 1-4 in Hamilton.



A sampler of growlers by Tim Carlborg.



19

Send your submissions for About Visual Arts

With About Visual Arts, *State of the Arts* continues to profile living Montana artists (no students, please), whose work is the focus of a current exhibit (on display during some portion of the two months covered by the current issue of *State of the Arts*).

Submissions must include:

- A digital image of the artist's work, with title of the piece;
- A brief bio and description of the artist's work (up to 300 words);
- Dates and title of exhibit; and
- The gallery or museum name, town and phone number.

MAC will select submissions that reflect a cross-section of gender, geography, styles and ethnicity, and are from a mix of public and private galleries and museums.

Deadline for submissions for the March/April issue is Feb. 1. Please send submissions to writes@livelytimes.com with About Visual Arts in the subject line.

About Visual Artists
compiled by Kristi
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